

REMARKS

Upon entry of this amendment, claims 14-16, 18-20, 22-24 and 26-28 are all the claims pending in the application. Claims 13, 17, 21 and 25 are canceled by this amendment.

I. Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants thank the Examiner for indicating that claims 14-16, 18-20, 22-24 and 26-28 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

By this amendment, Applicants have rewritten claims 14, 18, 22 and 26 in independent form, thereby placing these claims in immediate condition for allowance.

Claims 15 and 16 depend from claim 14; claims 19 and 20 depend from claim 18; claims 23 and 24 depend from claim 22; and claims 27 and 28 depend from claim 26. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that these claims are patentable at least by virtue of their dependency.

II. Claim Rejections

In the Office Action, claims 13, 17, 21 and 25 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Applicants' admitted prior art (Fig. 7) in view of Strawczynski et al. (US 6,148,422), and were also provisionally rejected under the judicially created doctrine of obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over claims 1, 4, 7 and 10 of copending Application No. 09/948,765.

Without acquiescing to the position taken by the Examiner in the above-noted rejections, Applicants note that in order to expedite prosecution, claims 13, 17, 21 and 25


have been canceled, and claims 14, 18, 22 and 26 have been rewritten in independent form, as noted above, thereby placing these claims in condition for allowance.

III. Conclusion

In view of the above, Applicants respectfully submit that the present application is in immediate condition for allowance, an indication of which is kindly requested. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may best be resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

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